# Are Fewer Elections Better Elections? The Impact of On-Cycle Elections on the Electoral Experience

Joshua Ferrer,* *American University*

Zoltan Hajnal,† *University of California, San Diego*

March 12, 2026

**Abstract**

Over the past decade, states around the country have moved to consolidate different elections to the same date. Despite this shifting landscape, we know little about what these reforms mean for the electoral process itself. Consolidating local elections with federal and statewide contests could make life easier for both voters and election administrators. But putting contests together could also put stress on the electoral process by asking voters to process a longer ballot and administrators to run different types of contests simultaneously. Utilizing original panel data on election timing and administrative and survey data, we find that switching to on-cycle elections leads to fewer elections, saves money, reduces the burden on election officials, and has a limited but positive impact on election quality. The one downside we observe—a small increase in voter wait times—could be addressed by redirecting some of the cost savings toward making voting easier.

## Impact Statement

America's electoral landscape is shifting. Elections for local offices - roughly 95 percent of all elected offices - are increasingly being held on the same day as federal contests. That clearly impacts who votes and wins. But it could also have major consequences for the electoral process itself. Combining elections could make voting easier. But it could also make ballots longer and more complex leading to longer lines and more mistakes. This article shows that consolidation reduces the number of elections and the burden on administrators. It also leads to a slight increase in turnout in national elections and few discernible changes in election performance or the voting process. This suggests that consolidating elections is a net benefit.

*Assistant Professor, Department of Government.

†Professor, School of Global Policy and Strategy.

# 1 Introduction

America is changing the way it elects its leaders. Over ninety percent of its elected officials serve in local offices (Lawless 2012). And until recently, the vast majority of these local officials were elected on days when the only positions up for election were at the local level.

But that is shifting. In a little over a decade, six states – including two of the most populous – have moved to consolidated elections with local contests occurring on the same day as state level and federal offices. Over the last few decades, the share of local offices that are elected on these on-cycle dates has doubled (de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023; Hartney and Hayes 2021).[1] The share of on-cycle elections is likely to increase even more going forward. Twenty-nine states introduced election consolidation legislation last legislative cycle, and a dozen states enacted consolidating laws (Guzman 2025). More could do so in the future.

Previous studies have shown that moving local elections on-cycle has a number of benefits. It has a dramatic impact on voter turnout – doubling or more than doubling participation in local contests (Anzia 2013; de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023; Marschall and Lappie 2025). Research also shows that the move radically impacts the composition of the vote (de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023). Moving on-cycle makes the electorate much younger, more racially diverse, and less skewed by class and wealth (Hajnal, Kogan, and Markarian 2022; Kogan, Lavertu, and Peskowitz 2018). These changes make the local electorate more representative of the underlying population.

In terms of its impact on turnout and the composition of the electorate, election timing is unlike every other electoral reform being actively considered in the United States. All of the traditional reforms – a list which includes automatic voter registration, universal vote-by-mail, ex-felon enfranchisement, same day registration, expanded early voting, extended polling hours, pre-registration for teens, and ranked choice voting – can increase turnout but

[1] Change has been substantial at the mayoral and school board level as well (Anzia 2013; de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023).

typically only by a small amount – usually a 1 to 5 percentage point increase (Burden et al. 2014; Chen et al. 2022; Dowling et al. 2024; Holbein and Hillygus 2016; Kaplan and Yuan 2020; Thompson et al. 2020; Uggen and Manza 2002; White and Nguyen 2022). Because these conventional reforms only have a marginal impact on overall turnout, they generally have little or no effect on the composition of the vote (Grimmer and Hersh 2024). By contrast, because election timing has such a large impact on both the number of Americans who vote and the types of Americans who vote – it is "the rare kind of policy that could change outcomes" (Grimmer and Hersh 2024).

Moving on-cycle also saves money and is popular. Moving all of a state's local offices to the same dates as statewide contests could save most of what authorities spend on these elections (Durning 2023). Additionally, surveys regularly show that two-thirds of Americans favor voting in one election on one day rather than voting in multiple elections across multiple different days (Anzia 2013; Ketcham and Severns 2024). Critically, that support is nonpartisan, with clear majorities of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents all favoring the move. In America's polarized political environment, that cross-party agreement is rare. It is also part of the reason why states across the political spectrum have enacted election consolidation reforms and why further consolidation remains viable in almost every state.

But the on-cycle move also raises an important question. Putting all or most of America's elections on the same day on the same ballot raises concerns about the electoral process itself. Skeptics worry that voters and election officials will not be able to handle the complexities of a longer ballot that includes a wide range of contests for different jurisdictions at different levels of office (Smith 2026). For voters, a longer, more complicated ballot could lead to longer stays in the voting booth and longer lines at the polls. For election administrators, more voters and more contests on the same date could create extra burdens that could ultimately lead to a less efficient voting experience and increased chances for administrative errors in ballot design and vote tabulation. In short, the election experience could get worse.

Yet, there are also reasons to expect election consolidation to improve elections for voters and administrators. Advocates argue that fewer election dates should lead to better elections. With fewer dates on the electoral cycle each year, election administrators should not have to prepare for as many different rounds of elections. That reduced burden could enable them to invest more time and effort into each individual election date. Election timing consolidation could also be more efficient for voters, who could do all of their voting at once, rather than voting multiple times across multiple dates. In short, the electoral experience could improve. Does holding local elections concurrently with state and federal elections improve or harm America's democracy? Does putting more contests on the same date lead to longer wait times, more mistakes, and declines in quality or does consolidation instead result in a more efficient electoral process? Despite growing attention to election timing, we know little about the effects of election dates on the electoral process itself. Before proceeding, advocates, skeptics, and others interested in improving American democracy should know whether fewer elections means better or worse elections.

This paper studies the effects of on-cycle elections on four key elements of the electoral experience: the number of different election days, the opinions of election administrators, objective indicators of election quality, and surveys of the voting experience. Utilizing original panel data on election timing both nationwide and for California and Florida, we find that switching to on-cycle elections 1) tends to lead to fewer elections, 2) reduces the burden on election officials, 3) has a limited but positive impact on election quality, and 4) does not substantially degrade the voters' experience, with the exception of slightly increased wait times at the polls. Taken together, our findings should provide reassurance that the rapid movement across states to consolidate local and federal elections will not substantially degrade the quality of election administration and that the move could improve the electoral experience in meaningful ways.

# 2 Data and Research Design

We collect original state-level panel data on election timing laws from 2014 to 2024. The panel is based on Anzia (2013) and is supplemented with yearly updates from the National Conference of State Legislators, Ballotpedia, and other online sources. States are coded on a 0–1 scale from 0 indicating local elections are required to be off-cycle to 1 indicating that they are required to be on-cycle. States where localities can choose their own dates are coded as either $\frac{1}{3}$ indicating that most localities have chosen off-cycle elections or as $\frac{2}{3}$ indicating that most localities hold on-cycle elections. We also focus on two individual states that allow cities to switch their own timing and have recently experienced significant variation in election timing: California (2000–2022) and Florida (2008–2018).[2] Because election administration in these states is at the county level, we calculate the percentage of cities in each county-year that hold local elections concurrently with state and federal elections.

We compile a wide range of panel data from administrative and survey sources to test the effects of on-cycle elections on election frequency, election administrators, election quality, and the voter experience. We calculate election jurisdiction-level election date frequency in two ways: using nationwide voter file data from L2 spanning 2014 to 2020, and manually from election dates listed on the websites of the 400 most populous counties from 2014 to 2024 (details of these datasets can be found in Section A.1 of the Online Appendix). We collect information on election officials by combining the 2019, 2020, and 2023 waves of the Early Voting Information Center's Survey of Local Election Officials.[3] These include questions on workload, funding, staffing, job satisfaction, job goals, and support for election date consolidation.

[2]California is particularly of interest because much of its recent variation in election timing is exogenous to indicators of election quality in general elections. SB 415—the California Voter Participation Rights Act, enacted in 2015, required most cities to move to on-cycle elections. The law stipulated that cities where off-cycle municipal turnout rates are significantly lower than turnout rate in national elections must consolidate their local elections to match national election dates.

[3]`https://evic.reed.edu/previous_leo_surveys/`

We use five objective measures to assess local election administration quality for federal general elections: voter turnout, residual vote, provisional vote rate, absentee rejection rate, and the incidence of reporting errors. Data on voter turnout is from Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections and spans 2000 to 2024. We calculate turnout using highest-office vote counts for the numerator (president in years divisible by four and governor or senator in other even years) and number of voting-age residents in the denominator.[4] Residual vote and reporting errors are also calculated from Leip data. Residual vote is measured as the share of ballots cast without a vote for highest office (Kropf et al. 2020; Stewart et al. 2020). In difference-in-difference estimators, high residual vote rates can signal errors in election administration, such as poor ballot design or poorly maintained election equipment. A county is coded as having a reporting error when it has a negative residual vote, or in other words when more votes are reported for highest office than for overall turnout. Data on provisional ballots cast and absentee ballots rejected is from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission's biannual Election Administration and Voting Surveys (EAVS) and span 2004 to 2024.[5] High rates of provisional voting and rejected absentee ballots can also indicate errors in election administration, such as inadequate election worker training and communication to voters. We calculate the provisional ballot rate as the share of total ballots that were cast provisionally. Absentee rejection rate is calculated as the share of absentee ballots that were rejected.

Finally, we capture data on voters' experiences at the polls using the 2014, 2016, 2020, and 2022 waves of the Survey of the Performance of American Elections.[6] We focus on three key indicators: self-reports of problems encountered while voting, voter wait times at the polls, and voter confidence in elections.

Our main estimation strategy is differences-in-differences, using unit and time fixed effects to measure the effect of a change from off-cycle to on-cycle local elections on the

[4]We rely on county-level estimates from the National Cancer Institute's Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results Program available at `https://seer.cancer.gov/popdata/singleages.html`.
[5]`https://www.eac.gov/research-and-data/datasets-codebooks-and-surveys-old`
[6]`https://electionlab.mit.edu/research/projects/survey-performance-american-elections`

electoral experience for voters and administrators.[7] Estimation of effects are at the election jurisdiction level, typically county or county-equivalent[8] Additionally, we employ a range of individual-level controls for survey data.

# 3 Analysis

## 3.1 Do On-Cycle Elections Mean Fewer Elections?

One of the arguments for moving local elections to the same day as federal elections is that it will reduce the number of times that Americans have to go to the polls to cast their ballots. That argument has not, however, been systematically tested. Since one set of contests (e.g. municipal elections) in a given location can be moved on-cycle, while another set of contests in that same location (e.g. school district elections) can remain off-cycle, it is not clear whether more on-cycle elections actually means fewer election dates.

In Table 1, we test to see if moving on-cycle does, in fact, reduce the number of elections. Since election timing is largely determined by state law, we first look to see whether election jurisdictions in states that mandate on-cycle elections have significantly fewer elections than jurisdictions in states with off-cycle elections. That simple comparison suggests that on-cycle states have roughly 0.5 fewer elections per jurisdiction than off-cycle states each year, 20% fewer. That effect fades somewhat when we also include fixed effects for counties/municipalities—a pattern that is not all that surprising given that relatively few states shifted their laws on timing within the time frame that we examine (2014–2020).

[7] Causal interpretation of our results is dependent on the parallel trends assumption. Our results are also susceptible to bias due to the staggered nature of treatment adoption. Due to the non-binary nature of treatment (with cities switching on-cycle and elections administered at the county level), we are unable to construct a time-series plot, employ heterogeneous-robust difference-in-difference estimators (Callaway and Sant'Anna 2021; de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille 2020) or employ alternative panel estimators such as imputation-based or generalized synthetic control. For these reasons, we do not make unqualified causal claims.

[8] Election jurisdictions are at the municipal level for eight states: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin. Elections are administered at the regional level in Alaska.

However, the effect is still substantively significant. Moving on-cycle leads to a 15% reduction in the annual number of elections administered. In the second half of the table, we focus on California and Florida, two states with more variation in timing and—in the case of California—a recent state mandated move to on-cycle dates. The Florida analysis indicates that all cities moving on-cycle within a county reduces the annual number of election dates by 1—a 34% reduction. The effect in California is even larger, though not as precisely estimated. Moving all cities on-cycle reduces a county's election date load by 59%. The results certainly vary but all point in the same direction: moving local elections on-cycle substantially reduces the number of electoral dates. They are also robust to using manually collected election date data, found in Table A.2 in the online appendix.

Table 1: **Effect of On-Cycle Elections on Number of Election Days**

| | Yearly Election Days | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| On-Cycle | -0.513 | -0.383 | | |
| | (0.242) | (0.280) | | |
| Percent On-Cycle | | | -1.525 | -0.966 |
| | | | (1.275) | (0.494) |
| Jurisdictions | 6295 | 6295 | 52 | 50 |
| Years | 7 | 7 | 7 | 5 |
| Observations | 44499 | 44499 | 364 | 250 |
| Outcome Mean | 2.51 | 2.51 | 2.57 | 2.92 |
| Jurisdiction FEs | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Year FEs | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Coverage | National | National | CA | FL |

Robust standard errors clustered by state (columns 1 and 2) and jurisdiction (columns 3 and 4) in parentheses. On-cycle codings range from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating all local elections are off-cycle, 1/3 indicating municipalities are allowed to decide whether to hold their elections off- or on-cycle but most hold them off-cycle, 2/3 indicating municipalities are allowed to decide but most hold elections on-cycle, and 1 indicating that all local elections are held on-cycle. Percent On-Cycle is the percentage of municipalities within an election jurisdiction (county) that hold their elections on-cycle. Yearly Election Days are calculated from L2 voter file data between 2014 and 2020, subsetted to registered voters who do not move over those years.

## 3.2 Do On-Cycle Elections Mean Better Elections?

A drop in the number of elections could have widely divergent effects. Reducing the number of elections could make life easier for voters (who have to travel to the polls less) and for election administrators (who have to prepare for fewer elections). But putting all or most of America's electoral contests on the same ballot on the same day could also cause confusion and extra burdens for all involved. In extreme cases, voters could be asked to make choices across hundreds of divergent contests on a ballot that could spill across several pages. Likewise, election administrators will need to work through the complexities of a longer ballot that incorporates a range of different jurisdictions running different types of elections. In the most extreme cases, administrators have to run both nonpartisan and partisan contests while simultaneously creating a system that counts the vote across a wide number of contests that occur at different levels—a system that could include everything from a national presidential election, to statewide contests, state legislative races, municipal contests, school district competitions, and special district races.

We begin with election administrators as they are the actors who actually run the election and may face the biggest burden during the transition to on-cycle elections. Our analysis of administrator views—which is displayed in Table 2—suggests that the move to on-cycle elections sharply reduces the burden on election officials. The diff-in-diff model indicates that shifting on-cycle leads to a sharp reduction in their workload. Election administrators report a 37% increase in the reasonableness of their workload. This is equivalent to moving their answer from "neither agreeing nor disagreeing" that their workload is reasonable to agreeing that it is. Administrators might worry that the reduced workload leads to a reduction in funding and support. While the latter appears to be true—we imprecisely estimate the average jurisdiction shedding 1.5 FTEs upon the move to on-cycle local elections (column 3)—administrators also become much more likely to report that the funding they receive is sufficient to do their job (column 2). The reduction in FTEs can explain studies finding cost savings in the move to on-cycle elections (Durning 2023).

Table 2: **Effect of On-Cycle Elections on Election Official Attitudes**

| | Workload reasonable (1) | Funding sufficient (2) | FTEs (3) | Sense of accomplish (4) | Job turnout (5) | Job dispar (6) | Support for consolidation (7) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| On-Cycle | 1.146 | 1.557 | -1.504 | 1.346 | 1.292 | 0.537 | 1.461 |
| | (0.343) | (0.277) | (1.683) | (0.084) | (0.303) | (0.216) | (0.466) |
| Years | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Observations | 2103 | 2106 | 2086 | 1889 | 1921 | 2086 | 2099 |
| Outcome Mean | 3.10 | 3.26 | 5.94 | 4.51 | 3.78 | 3.47 | 3.48 |
| Jurisdiction FEs | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Year FEs | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Individual Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses. Data is from the 2019, 2020, and 2023 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials. Individual controls are total number of registered voters in election jurisdiction and the age, gender, race, education, and salary of the election official. Column 1 is from the question: "My workload is reasonable". Column 2 is reverse-coded from the question: "A lack of sufficient funding often prevents me from doing my job well." Column 3 measures full-time equivalents, which is derived from taking the midpoint values of FTE ranges. Column 4 is from the question: "My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment." Column 5 is from the question: "It is part of my job to encourage voter turnout." Column 6 is from the question: "Local election officials should work to reduce demographic disparities in voter turnout." Column 7 is from the question: "Consolidate local, state, and federal elections to take place at the same time." Besides for FTEs, all questions are on a 1-5 Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

One net effect of all of this is a greater sense of accomplishment among election officials (column 4). After the move to on-cycle elections, administrators are also able to focus more on raising voter turnout (column 5) and reducing demographic disparities in voter turnout (column 6). Given the importance of voter turnout and the composition of the vote for representation, this increased focus could be vital to improving America's democracy.

Finally, we examine whether administrators' experience running on-cycle elections leads to changes in how they view election consolidation. Across the nation, local election official support for consolidation is broad. In each year of the Local Election Official Survey, slightly over half of all respondents support consolidating local, state, and federal elections. Only about 20 percent express opposition each year. Critically, experience with on-cycle elections increases that already high level of support. Our diff-in-diff analysis suggests that support for consolidated elections grows substantially in jurisdictions that have recently experienced the transition to on-cycle elections than it does in jurisdictions that have not. The effect is equivalent to moving from "Neither support or oppose" election consolidation to halfway

between "support" and "strongly support". The fact that the officials who oversee elections are more enthusiastic about on-cycle elections after running those consolidated elections is telling.

## 3.3 Do On-Cycle Elections Impact Election Quality?

In this section we evaluate the impact of election timing on the quality of election administration. In Table 3 we assess five objective metrics of election quality and performance: voter turnout, residual vote rate, provisional vote rate, absentee rejection rate, and outcome reporting errors. The analysis reveals no significant change in election quality on most of the measures we examine. There is no evidence that residual vote rates increase, no sign of gains in the provisional vote rate, and no rise in the incidence of reporting errors when election dates are consolidated. These null effects are evident at both the national level and in the Florida and California analysis. Across most indicators of election quality, on-cycle elections mirror off-cycle elections.

The only metric for which there might be a reduction in election performance is the absentee rejection rate. The national analysis suggests that consolidated elections may have a higher absentee ballot rejection rate. But this effect is not statistically significant ($p = .057$) and is not replicated in the state-level analyses. In fact, the point estimate for Florida is larger in magnitude in the opposite direction, albeit imprecisely estimated. Taken together, it does not appear that consolidating election dates has any significant negative impact on election quality.

Election performance does appear to improve in one way. Consolidated general elections—at least in the national analysis—have significantly higher turnout than unconsolidated elections. In some respects that is remarkable. It suggests that adding lower tier local contests to a general election can increase turnout in higher profile federal contests for president and Congress. Should we really expect the addition of a city council or school board contest to a presidential ballot to increase participation in the presidential contest? Perhaps so (Phillips

2020). While local level contests gain relatively little national attention, for the candidates themselves and for many of the residents who vote in those lower tier contests, it matters who wins and who loses those contests. Because candidates for local office often work hard to bring their voters to the ballot box, it might not be unreasonable to expect their efforts to mobilize a small set of locally engaged residents who may not always participate in national contests. Indeed, the effect size—a 3 percentage point increase in turnout in general federal contests—may not be out of proportion to this kind of local level mobilization. At the same time, the fact that we uncover no similar increase in turnout in the California and Florida analysis indicates that further testing is required.

Table 3: **Effect of On-Cycle Elections on Election Quality**

| | Voter turnout (1) | Residual vote (2) | Provisional rate (3) | Absentee reject rate (4) | Reporting error (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Panel A: National* | | | | | |
| On-Cycle | 0.032 | 0.005 | 0.010 | 0.013 | -0.032 |
| | (0.009) | (0.005) | (0.009) | (0.007) | (0.027) |
| Counties | 2918 | 2514 | 2753 | 2937 | 2601 |
| Years | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Observations | 13829 | 11225 | 15911 | 16582 | 12091 |
| Outcome Mean | 0.53 | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.02 | 0.01 |
| *Panel B: California* | | | | | |
| On-Cycle Percent | 0.006 | 0.003 | -0.013 | -0.019 | |
| | (0.006) | (0.002) | (0.013) | (0.016) | |
| Counties | 52 | 52 | 52 | 52 | |
| Years | 12 | 12 | 8 | 10 | |
| Observations | 624 | 624 | 414 | 495 | |
| Outcome Mean | 0.45 | 0.02 | 0.04 | 0.02 | |
| *Panel C: Florida* | | | | | |
| On-Cycle Percent | 0.005 | 0.000 | -0.000 | -0.003 | 0.011 |
| | (0.009) | (0.001) | (0.000) | (0.002) | (0.011) |
| Counties | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| Years | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Observations | 300 | 300 | 300 | 299 | 300 |
| Outcome Mean | 0.52 | 0.01 | 0.00 | 0.01 | 0.00 |
| Jurisdiction FEs | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Year FEs | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Robust standard errors clustered by state (Panel A) or jurisdiction (Panels B-C) in parentheses. Turnout is measured as the share of voting-age residents who cast a vote in the presidential race for presidential years and the gubernatorial race for midterm years. Residual vote is measured as the share of ballots cast without a vote for president in presidential years and for governor in midterm years. Provisional ballot rate is measured as the share of ballots cast as provisionals. Absentee ballot rejection rate is the share of absentee ballots that are rejected. Reporting errors are when a county has a negative residual vote, or in other words when more votes are reported for highest office than for overall turnout. David Leip's U.S. Election Atlas provides turnout and election outcome data used to calculate residual vote and reporting errors. Provisionals and absentee ballot rejection rates are from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission's EAVS reports. There is no output in Column 5 for California because of a lack of variation on the dependent variable: no counties in the state have a reporting error between 2000 and 2022.

### 3.4 Do On-Cycle Elections Lead To A Better Voting Experience?

The results so far suggest that shifting to on-cycle elections has few negative effects and may in fact lead to increased turnout and reduced burdens on administrators. But we have not yet assessed the principal actors in democracy: the voters themselves. To best gauge the impact of on-cycle elections, we need to know how changes in election dates alter the experience of voters. To assess those experiences we turn to the four most recent waves of the Survey of the Performance of American Elections with county identifiers—a national survey of registered voters designed to offer insight into the voting process.

Even though consolidated elections add more contests, there is little sign in Table 4 that on-cycle elections degrade the voter's experience. As the table indicates, Americans who vote on-cycle are not more likely to report problems in the voting process. They report slightly longer waits at the polls—3.5 additional minutes, on average—but this effect is not statistically significant ($p = .15$). Critically, their trust in the electoral process does not change. Moving on-cycle does not have a statistically significant effect on their trust in the efficacy of their own vote or their trust in the efficacy of the national electoral process (in Table A.3 in the Online Appendix, we also show that moving on-cycle does not significantly affect voters' trust in their county and state vote as well). Across these metrics, moving on-cycle has little demonstrable impact on the voting experience.

Given the concerns expressed by on-cycle opponents about the effects of a longer ballot, we conduct additional tests of wait times. Instead of using a numerical measure of wait times imputed from ordinal categories, we examine the effect of election dates on each possible wait time segment: no wait, up to 10 minutes, up to 30 minutes, up to an hour, and more than an hour. The descriptive results appear on the left panel of Figure 1 and the regression results with controls appear on the right panel (tabular results can be found in Table A.4 of the Online Appendix). The descriptive results reveal only minor differences in wait times between voters who live in off-cycle jurisdictions and those that live in on-cycle jurisdictions. However, the statistical results give a different picture. In jurisdictions that move to on-

Table 4: **Effect of On-Cycle Elections on Voter Experiences**

| | Problem | Wait (min) | Voter Confidence Own | Voter Confidence Nation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| On-Cycle | -0.000 | 3.467 | -0.043 | 0.075 |
| | (0.009) | (2.373) | (0.046) | (0.041) |
| Years | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Observations | 47968 | 27891 | 41717 | 45861 |
| Outcome Mean | 0.04 | 9.89 | 0.71 | 0.34 |
| County FEs | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Year FEs | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Individual Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

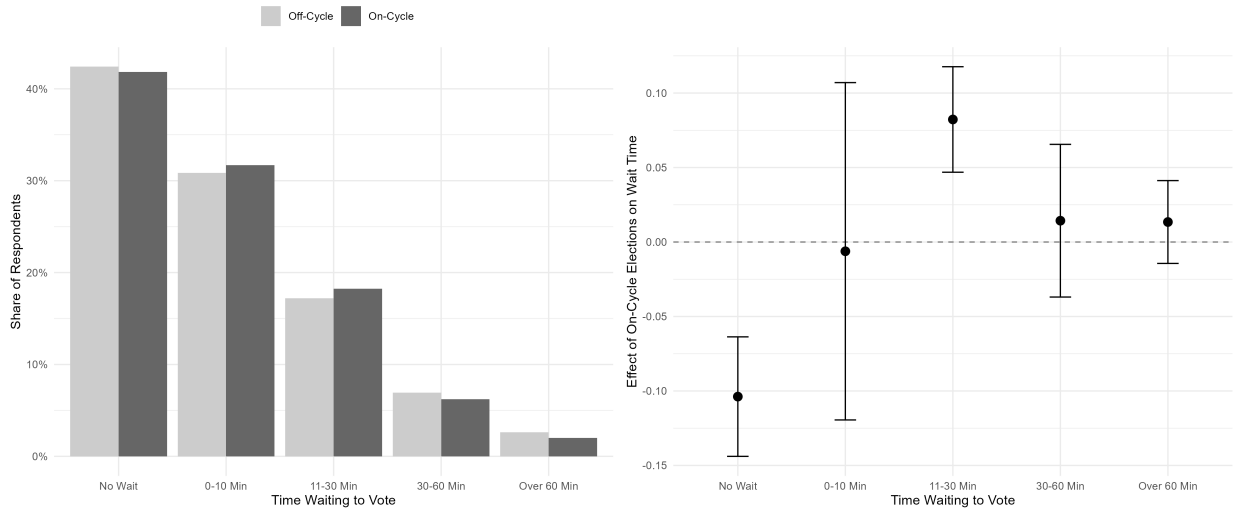
Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses. Individual controls are age, gender, race, education, income, and party identity. Data from the 2014, 2016, 2020, and 2022 waves of the Survey of the Performance of American Elections.

cycle elections, the share of voters who report no wait times declines by about 10 percentage points. This is offset by a nearly equivalent increase in voters waiting between 11 and 30 minutes. There are no significant effects on voters waiting between 0 and 10 minutes, or on voters waiting more than 30 minutes to vote.

These increases in wait times are not surprising given that voters are being asked to vote on many additional contests on the same day. Thankfully, they do not appear to exacerbate excessively long wait times at the polls [9]. Nevertheless, any increase in the costs of voting—no matter how small—is something that legislators should consider incorporating into their legislative plans. Wherever election consolidation is being contemplated, legislators should consider tools to make voting easier, incentives to spur ballot-design improvements, and additional financial support to the local administrators tasked with implementing consolidated elections (Ketcham and Severns 2024). These additional measures, which might include more voting equipment, more poll workers, more polling locations, and greater access to early vot-

[9]The 2014 Presidential Commission on Election Administration recommends 30 minutes as the upper limit that any citizen should have to wait to cast a ballot. `https://web.mit.edu/supportthevoter/www/files/2014/01/Amer-Voting-Exper-final-draft-01-09-14-508.pdf`

Figure 1: **On-Cycle Elections May Modestly Increase Wait Times**. The left panel presents the distribution of wait times in jurisdictions and years with on-cycle elections compared to those with off-cycle elections. Only jurisdictions in states with all off-cycle or all on-cycle state and local elections are included. The right panel presents estimates of the effect of on-cycle elections on the probability a resident experiences a given wait time at the polls. The estimates in the right panel come from separate regressions of a dummy variable for each category of wait time on jurisdiction and year fixed effects and individual-level age, gender, race, education, income, and party identification controls. Both plots rely on data from the 2014, 2016, 2020, and 2022 waves of the Survey of the Performance of American Elections.




ing and absentee voting options, could be funded by funnelling some of the substantial cost savings of on-cycle elections back into the elections themselves.

# 4 Discussion

The rapid adoption of on-cycle elections across the country raises real concerns for the electoral process. Aligning different electoral contests on the same day both lengthens and complicates the ballot—two changes that could challenge voters and election officials. At the same time, with more contests decided on one day, it raises the stakes to get things right and the consequences for administrative errors. The analysis presented in this article suggests that these concerns are largely unwarranted. On almost all measures, we find that moving on-cycle has no negative effects on election administrators, on voters, and on the electoral process. Instead, we uncover a number of positive attributes: by reducing the number of election dates, on-cycle elections significantly reduce the burden on election administrators. That reduced workload allows election officials to focus more of their time and energy on core democratic outcomes like increasing turnout and making the electorate more representative of the underlying population. The net result is a slight increase in voter turnout in national general elections, few discernible changes in election performance metrics, and a strikingly similar voting experience for individual voters.

These findings are important because they address one of the most important concerns related to election date consolidation (Smith 2026). What we learn here – that elections run as smoothly or even more smoothly when elections are consolidated – tells us that the previously documented turnout (Marschall and Lappie 2025; Phillips 2020), representational (Hajnal, Kogan, and Markarian 2022), and cost-saving (Durning 2023) benefits to on-cycle elections are not offset by major declines in the electoral process itself. We do uncover marginal increases in voter wait times that warrant further attention. But this could be ameliorated by using the money saved in staff reduction from consolidating election dates to purchase more voting equipment, hire more poll workers, and extend early voting hours around the consolidated elections.

It is important to recognize there are still trade-offs to moving municipal elections on-cycle. Consolidated elections might reduce attention to local political affairs. They could

also increase partisanship and polarization at the local level. More work on these topics is certainly warranted, and politicians should consider these potential downsides when weighing whether to consolidate election dates.

Nevertheless, our findings have significant implications for American democracy. They matter first and foremost because election timing has enormous potential to impact almost all aspects of the local democratic process. Moving to on-cycle presidential dates has a massive impact on turnout for local offices– doubling or more than doubling participation (Anzia 2013; de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023; Marschall and Lappie 2025). There is little doubt that moving to consolidated elections is the single most important change that reformers can undertake to increase turnout in local contests. That means that by moving on-cycle, states like Arizona, California, Nevada, New York, Virginia, and West Virginia will likely add more than 10 million new voters to local democracy by the time those reforms are fully implemented. Los Angeles alone added more than half a million voters when that city held its first November even year mayoral contest in 2022.[10]

There is also little doubt that the move to on-cycle dates changes who votes more than other reforms. The fact that on-cycle elections greatly increase the share of local voters who are young and who are Americans of color means that a move on-cycle makes local democracy more representative of local communities (Hajnal, Kogan, and Markarian 2022). The net effect is a local government that is also more representative of the local population and policies that are more in line with the median resident (Dynes, Hartney, and Hayes 2021; Hajnal, Kogan, and Markarian 2025). In short, future changes in election timing could have a dramatic impact on local democracy.

These findings also matter because more election timing reform is likely. Despite recent reforms around the country, most of America remains off-cycle (de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023; Durning 2023). Over 60 percent of America's local elections are still held off-cycle, where turnout is exceptionally low and extremely skewed (de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023;

[10] `https://laist.com/news/politics/turnout-la-mayoral-race-2022`

Hajnal, Kogan, and Markarian 2022). If legislators continue the trend of having Americans vote once in on-cycle elections rather than voting on different dates for different offices, then it will no doubt transform local democracy (Anzia 2013; Ketcham and Severns 2024).

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# Online Appendix

Intended for online publication only.

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## A.1 Election Day Frequency Data Collection

### A.1.1 L2 Dataset

Our primary method for calculating election day frequency uses nationwide voter file data from L2 that spans 2014 to 2020. Following best practices (Kim and Fraga 2022), we list the dates of state voter files used in Table A.1 in Table A.1. All state voter files record individual voter participation histories, indicating whether a ballot was cast by each voter on every election date in the state.

To calculate how many elections local election officials administer each year in the United States, we first filter to registered voters who are continuously in the voter file between 2014 and 2021 and maintain the same residential address throughout that period. This is to avoid the false positives that are created when people who relocate cast ballots in both their old and new jurisdictions in the same year. We count an election as occurring on a date in a jurisdiction if at least 1 vote is recorded as being cast. [11]

Table A.1: L2 Voter File Dates Used

| State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AK | 4/18/2014 | AK | 3/13/2015 | AK | 7/28/2015 | AK | 8/26/2015 |
| AK | 12/9/2015 | AK | 2/9/2016 | AK | 5/21/2016 | AK | 6/22/2016 |
| AK | 9/23/2016 | AK | 1/27/2017 | AK | 5/25/2017 | AK | 8/15/2018 |
| AK | 10/2/2018 | AK | 5/3/2019 | AK | 7/2/2019 | AK | 2/24/2020 |
| AK | 8/14/2020 | AK | 10/9/2020 | AK | 2/3/2021 | AK | 7/4/2021 |
| AK | 11/3/2021 | AK | 11/24/2021 | AL | 3/18/2014 | AL | 4/10/2015 |
| AL | 7/29/2015 | AL | 10/14/2015 | AL | 12/9/2015 | AL | 1/24/2016 |
| AL | 3/7/2017 | AL | 6/13/2017 | AL | 11/1/2017 | AL | 7/7/2018 |
| AL | 5/16/2019 | AL | 6/12/2019 | AL | 8/27/2019 | AL | 2/17/2020 |
| AL | 2/24/2020 | AL | 4/10/2020 | AL | 8/14/2020 | AL | 10/9/2020 |
| AL | 2/24/2021 | AL | 7/5/2021 | AL | 11/3/2021 | AL | 11/14/2021 |
| AR | 4/11/2014 | AR | 3/24/2015 | AR | 7/28/2015 | AR | 8/31/2015 |
| State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date |

[11] An additional source of bias is the omission of local and special election data from some state voter files. It is not possible to correct such missing data. However, there is no reason to believe that the omission of local and special election dates correlate with jurisdictions moving on-cycle.

| State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AR | 3/15/2016 | AR | 9/23/2016 | AR | 3/29/2017 | AR | 7/5/2017 |
| AR | 1/30/2018 | AR | 9/20/2018 | AR | 5/13/2019 | AR | 9/21/2019 |
| AR | 2/7/2020 | AR | 2/24/2020 | AR | 4/11/2020 | AR | 7/30/2020 |
| AR | 3/16/2021 | AR | 11/3/2021 | AZ | 3/14/2014 | AZ | 4/22/2015 |
| AZ | 7/28/2015 | AZ | 10/3/2016 | AZ | 4/12/2017 | AZ | 8/26/2017 |
| AZ | 10/24/2017 | AZ | 8/27/2018 | AZ | 5/10/2019 | AZ | 10/21/2019 |
| AZ | 2/19/2020 | AZ | 6/16/2020 | AZ | 10/23/2020 | AZ | 1/13/2021 |
| AZ | 5/20/2021 | AZ | 7/5/2021 | AZ | 11/3/2021 | CA | 3/21/2014 |
| CA | 5/21/2015 | CA | 9/29/2016 | CA | 7/8/2017 | CA | 8/17/2018 |
| CA | 8/2/2019 | CA | 7/2/2020 | CA | 8/24/2021 | CO | 5/5/2014 |
| CO | 5/5/2015 | CO | 7/28/2015 | CO | 1/30/2016 | CO | 10/13/2016 |
| CO | 12/15/2016 | CO | 2/8/2017 | CO | 6/1/2017 | CO | 12/27/2017 |
| CO | 8/8/2018 | CO | 12/20/2018 | CO | 5/8/2019 | CO | 8/31/2019 |
| CO | 1/23/2020 | CO | 2/26/2020 | CO | 4/23/2020 | CO | 6/24/2020 |
| CO | 8/24/2020 | CO | 10/30/2020 | CO | 12/23/2020 | CO | 5/28/2021 |
| CO | 7/5/2021 | CO | 11/3/2021 | CT | 3/14/2014 | CT | 3/25/2015 |
| CT | 7/28/2015 | CT | 8/17/2015 | CT | 3/9/2016 | CT | 9/23/2016 |
| CT | 1/20/2017 | CT | 6/9/2017 | CT | 8/27/2018 | CT | 5/8/2019 |
| CT | 6/3/2019 | CT | 2/21/2020 | CT | 8/14/2020 | CT | 10/13/2020 |
| CT | 3/30/2021 | CT | 7/13/2021 | DC | 3/14/2014 | DC | 3/7/2015 |
| DC | 7/28/2015 | DC | 3/1/2016 | DC | 9/23/2016 | DC | 2/15/2017 |
| DC | 6/19/2017 | DC | 3/1/2018 | DC | 5/3/2019 | DC | 6/5/2019 |
| DC | 1/13/2020 | DC | 3/2/2020 | DC | 4/30/2020 | DC | 7/30/2020 |
| DC | 1/30/2021 | DC | 7/5/2021 | DE | 3/20/2014 | DE | 2/23/2015 |
| DE | 8/18/2015 | DE | 9/23/2016 | DE | 1/17/2017 | DE | 1/11/2018 |
| DE | 8/18/2018 | DE | 10/12/2018 | DE | 5/10/2019 | DE | 10/3/2019 |
| DE | 2/16/2020 | DE | 8/14/2020 | DE | 10/23/2020 | DE | 3/24/2021 |
| DE | 7/5/2021 | DE | 11/3/2021 | FL | 3/17/2014 | FL | 1/28/2015 |
| FL | 5/16/2015 | FL | 3/1/2016 | FL | 3/6/2017 | FL | 8/2/2018 |
| FL | 7/4/2019 | FL | 7/30/2020 | FL | 7/20/2021 | GA | 4/20/2014 |
| GA | 9/1/2015 | GA | 9/23/2016 | GA | 8/16/2017 | GA | 7/5/2018 |
| GA | 6/11/2019 | GA | 7/24/2020 | GA | 7/16/2021 | HI | 5/1/2014 |
| HI | 9/23/2016 | HI | 3/22/2017 | HI | 8/27/2018 | HI | 10/24/2019 |
| HI | 10/22/2020 | HI | 7/5/2021 | IA | 5/2/2014 | IA | 1/27/2015 |
| IA | 3/25/2015 | IA | 7/28/2015 | IA | 9/5/2015 | IA | 10/18/2016 |
| IA | 1/31/2017 | IA | 6/13/2017 | IA | 8/25/2018 | IA | 8/27/2018 |
| IA | 5/10/2019 | IA | 11/26/2019 | IA | 1/9/2020 | IA | 3/3/2020 |
| IA | 4/23/2020 | IA | 8/6/2020 | IA | 10/22/2020 | IA | 3/4/2021 |
| IA | 7/7/2021 | IA | 11/3/2021 | ID | 3/20/2014 | ID | 2/23/2015 |
| State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date |

| State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ID | 7/29/2015 | ID | 3/2/2016 | ID | 10/5/2016 | ID | 3/20/2017 |
| ID | 7/25/2017 | ID | 8/25/2017 | ID | 8/21/2018 | ID | 8/27/2018 |
| ID | 5/3/2019 | ID | 7/10/2019 | ID | 2/24/2020 | ID | 8/14/2020 |
| ID | 10/4/2020 | ID | 3/16/2021 | ID | 7/5/2021 | ID | 11/3/2021 |
| ID | 11/17/2021 | IL | 3/16/2014 | IL | 3/2/2015 | IL | 9/23/2016 |
| IL | 9/27/2017 | IL | 8/27/2018 | IL | 5/14/2019 | IL | 3/3/2020 |
| IL | 7/16/2021 | IN | 3/27/2014 | IN | 5/6/2015 | IN | 7/29/2015 |
| IN | 8/7/2015 | IN | 2/7/2016 | IN | 9/23/2016 | IN | 4/7/2017 |
| IN | 7/12/2017 | IN | 10/12/2017 | IN | 3/16/2018 | IN | 10/17/2018 |
| IN | 5/3/2019 | IN | 8/1/2019 | IN | 1/22/2020 | IN | 2/27/2020 |
| IN | 5/7/2020 | IN | 8/24/2020 | IN | 1/15/2021 | IN | 7/8/2021 |
| KS | 3/16/2014 | KS | 2/26/2015 | KS | 7/29/2015 | KS | 12/11/2015 |
| KS | 9/23/2016 | KS | 2/16/2017 | KS | 6/19/2017 | KS | 7/9/2018 |
| KS | 5/3/2019 | KS | 6/11/2019 | KS | 2/24/2020 | KS | 3/18/2020 |
| KS | 7/15/2020 | KS | 3/16/2021 | KS | 8/24/2021 | KY | 3/19/2014 |
| KY | 3/5/2015 | KY | 7/29/2015 | KY | 12/12/2015 | KY | 2/21/2016 |
| KY | 9/23/2016 | KY | 3/3/2017 | KY | 6/23/2017 | KY | 5/2/2018 |
| KY | 9/29/2018 | KY | 5/10/2019 | KY | 11/18/2019 | KY | 2/26/2020 |
| KY | 8/14/2020 | KY | 9/14/2020 | KY | 5/11/2021 | KY | 11/3/2021 |
| KY | 12/8/2021 | LA | 3/20/2014 | LA | 2/23/2015 | LA | 5/17/2015 |
| LA | 7/29/2015 | LA | 12/12/2015 | LA | 1/29/2016 | LA | 9/23/2016 |
| LA | 2/14/2017 | LA | 7/17/2017 | LA | 10/31/2017 | LA | 6/25/2018 |
| LA | 5/15/2019 | LA | 9/24/2019 | LA | 12/11/2019 | LA | 2/27/2020 |
| LA | 8/14/2020 | LA | 10/18/2020 | LA | 1/22/2021 | LA | 7/7/2021 |
| LA | 11/3/2021 | MA | 3/16/2014 | MA | 4/2/2015 | MA | 12/12/2015 |
| MA | 2/26/2016 | MA | 9/28/2016 | MA | 4/11/2017 | MA | 10/17/2017 |
| MA | 5/11/2018 | MA | 1/18/2019 | MA | 5/10/2019 | MA | 8/15/2019 |
| MA | 2/19/2020 | MA | 5/29/2020 | MA | 9/28/2020 | MA | 1/19/2021 |
| MA | 7/8/2021 | MA | 12/19/2021 | MD | 3/26/2014 | MD | 2/25/2015 |
| MD | 7/29/2015 | MD | 12/12/2015 | MD | 10/3/2016 | MD | 1/20/2017 |
| MD | 6/9/2017 | MD | 9/7/2017 | MD | 2/22/2018 | MD | 5/10/2019 |
| MD | 6/20/2019 | MD | 12/17/2019 | MD | 2/28/2020 | MD | 5/7/2020 |
| MD | 8/21/2020 | MD | 2/15/2021 | MD | 7/5/2021 | MD | 11/3/2021 |
| MD | 12/17/2021 | ME | 3/20/2014 | ME | 4/29/2015 | ME | 7/29/2015 |
| ME | 12/12/2015 | ME | 10/5/2016 | ME | 4/7/2017 | ME | 11/1/2017 |
| ME | 4/28/2018 | ME | 5/3/2019 | ME | 7/17/2019 | ME | 2/24/2020 |
| ME | 6/18/2020 | ME | 9/29/2020 | ME | 5/28/2021 | ME | 7/5/2021 |
| ME | 11/3/2021 | MI | 3/17/2014 | MI | 2/28/2015 | MI | 12/11/2015 |
| MI | 9/28/2016 | MI | 2/21/2017 | MI | 7/17/2018 | MI | 10/1/2018 |
| State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date |

| State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MI | 5/13/2019 | MI | 8/30/2019 | MI | 3/2/2020 | MI | 8/14/2020 |
| MI | 9/20/2020 | MI | 11/3/2021 | MI | 1/5/2022 | MN | 3/17/2014 |
| MN | 3/3/2015 | MN | 7/31/2015 | MN | 12/12/2015 | MN | 2/25/2016 |
| MN | 10/3/2016 | MN | 3/10/2017 | MN | 7/22/2017 | MN | 7/31/2018 |
| MN | 8/27/2018 | MN | 5/10/2019 | MN | 10/3/2019 | MN | 2/25/2020 |
| MN | 8/14/2020 | MN | 10/19/2020 | MN | 2/14/2021 | MN | 7/23/2021 |
| MO | 3/19/2014 | MO | 3/2/2015 | MO | 7/30/2015 | MO | 9/3/2015 |
| MO | 9/28/2016 | MO | 12/1/2016 | MO | 2/8/2017 | MO | 6/7/2017 |
| MO | 6/28/2018 | MO | 10/5/2018 | MO | 5/10/2019 | MO | 6/3/2019 |
| MO | 2/20/2020 | MO | 6/23/2020 | MO | 9/22/2020 | MO | 2/11/2021 |
| MS | 3/17/2014 | MS | 3/17/2015 | MS | 7/29/2015 | MS | 12/13/2015 |
| MS | 2/19/2016 | MS | 10/3/2016 | MS | 7/27/2017 | MS | 3/23/2018 |
| MS | 9/18/2018 | MS | 3/11/2019 | MS | 5/12/2019 | MS | 8/8/2019 |
| MS | 3/3/2020 | MS | 6/9/2020 | MS | 8/17/2020 | MS | 3/23/2021 |
| MS | 11/3/2021 | MT | 3/18/2014 | MT | 3/27/2015 | MT | 7/30/2015 |
| MT | 12/13/2015 | MT | 10/3/2016 | MT | 1/25/2017 | MT | 7/14/2017 |
| MT | 8/3/2018 | MT | 5/3/2019 | MT | 6/13/2019 | MT | 2/29/2020 |
| MT | 3/14/2020 | MT | 8/19/2020 | MT | 12/14/2020 | MT | 11/3/2021 |
| MT | 11/22/2021 | NC | 3/27/2014 | NC | 7/29/2015 | NC | 10/19/2016 |
| NC | 5/24/2017 | NC | 6/28/2018 | NC | 5/10/2019 | NC | 8/14/2020 |
| NC | 5/18/2021 | ND | 3/17/2014 | ND | 4/15/2015 | ND | 7/31/2015 |
| ND | 12/13/2015 | ND | 9/28/2016 | ND | 2/9/2017 | ND | 3/21/2018 |
| ND | 9/8/2018 | ND | 5/13/2019 | ND | 10/14/2019 | ND | 2/28/2020 |
| ND | 8/15/2020 | ND | 9/18/2020 | ND | 3/18/2021 | ND | 7/5/2021 |
| ND | 11/3/2021 | NE | 3/18/2014 | NE | 3/25/2015 | NE | 7/29/2015 |
| NE | 12/13/2015 | NE | 10/3/2016 | NE | 1/13/2017 | NE | 5/25/2017 |
| NE | 7/11/2018 | NE | 5/3/2019 | NE | 11/26/2019 | NE | 2/20/2020 |
| NE | 3/18/2020 | NE | 6/27/2020 | NE | 1/20/2021 | NE | 7/30/2021 |
| NE | 11/3/2021 | NH | 3/17/2014 | NH | 10/13/2014 | NH | 3/20/2015 |
| NH | 7/29/2015 | NH | 9/11/2015 | NH | 12/13/2015 | NH | 10/3/2016 |
| NH | 8/15/2018 | NH | 8/27/2018 | NH | 5/13/2019 | NH | 10/22/2019 |
| NH | 1/5/2020 | NH | 3/3/2020 | NH | 7/30/2020 | NH | 3/25/2021 |
| NH | 7/5/2021 | NJ | 4/22/2014 | NJ | 2/25/2015 | NJ | 7/30/2015 |
| NJ | 12/12/2015 | NJ | 9/29/2016 | NJ | 3/31/2017 | NJ | 4/25/2017 |
| NJ | 9/20/2017 | NJ | 3/6/2018 | NJ | 10/16/2018 | NJ | 3/1/2019 |
| NJ | 5/13/2019 | NJ | 9/30/2019 | NJ | 2/26/2020 | NJ | 5/12/2020 |
| NJ | 6/18/2020 | NJ | 9/9/2020 | NJ | 3/11/2021 | NJ | 7/11/2021 |
| NJ | 8/26/2021 | NJ | 11/3/2021 | NJ | 1/5/2022 | NM | 3/20/2014 |
| NM | 3/19/2015 | NM | 7/29/2015 | NM | 12/13/2015 | NM | 3/12/2016 |
| State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date |

| State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NM | 9/28/2016 | NM | 2/8/2017 | NM | 8/12/2017 | NM | 10/26/2017 |
| NM | 8/21/2018 | NM | 11/7/2018 | NM | 5/3/2019 | NM | 6/17/2019 |
| NM | 6/24/2019 | NM | 11/9/2019 | NM | 2/24/2020 | NM | 4/15/2020 |
| NM | 8/24/2020 | NM | 2/25/2021 | NM | 7/9/2021 | NM | 11/3/2021 |
| NM | 1/4/2022 | NV | 3/14/2014 | NV | 1/30/2015 | NV | 5/28/2015 |
| NV | 7/29/2015 | NV | 12/13/2015 | NV | 10/7/2016 | NV | 1/13/2017 |
| NV | 5/24/2017 | NV | 11/24/2017 | NV | 8/10/2018 | NV | 5/3/2019 |
| NV | 6/4/2019 | NV | 1/11/2020 | NV | 2/22/2020 | NV | 4/22/2020 |
| NV | 8/5/2020 | NV | 12/17/2020 | NV | 6/13/2021 | NV | 7/7/2021 |
| NV | 11/3/2021 | NY | 4/15/2014 | NY | 7/28/2015 | NY | 10/23/2016 |
| NY | 6/17/2017 | NY | 8/14/2018 | NY | 7/25/2019 | NY | 8/24/2020 |
| NY | 11/3/2021 | OH | 3/17/2014 | OH | 7/29/2015 | OH | 10/5/2016 |
| OH | 6/30/2017 | OH | 6/28/2018 | OH | 5/22/2019 | OH | 5/3/2020 |
| OH | 5/28/2021 | OK | 3/17/2014 | OK | 3/26/2015 | OK | 7/29/2015 |
| OK | 12/13/2015 | OK | 2/24/2016 | OK | 10/3/2016 | OK | 1/12/2017 |
| OK | 4/22/2017 | OK | 6/8/2017 | OK | 8/6/2018 | OK | 10/9/2018 |
| OK | 5/3/2019 | OK | 8/13/2019 | OK | 1/10/2020 | OK | 2/25/2020 |
| OK | 4/15/2020 | OK | 6/1/2020 | OK | 7/29/2020 | OK | 9/19/2020 |
| OK | 2/8/2021 | OK | 11/3/2021 | OK | 12/8/2021 | OR | 3/17/2014 |
| OR | 4/16/2015 | OR | 7/29/2015 | OR | 12/13/2015 | OR | 10/26/2016 |
| OR | 1/13/2017 | OR | 6/6/2017 | OR | 9/13/2017 | OR | 7/26/2018 |
| OR | 8/27/2018 | OR | 5/8/2019 | OR | 6/25/2019 | OR | 1/7/2020 |
| OR | 2/25/2020 | OR | 7/17/2020 | OR | 2/5/2021 | OR | 7/9/2021 |
| OR | 11/3/2021 | PA | 5/1/2014 | PA | 7/29/2015 | PA | 3/8/2016 |
| PA | 8/4/2017 | PA | 8/24/2018 | PA | 8/22/2019 | PA | 7/2/2020 |
| PA | 7/16/2021 | RI | 3/19/2014 | RI | 3/6/2015 | RI | 7/29/2015 |
| RI | 12/13/2015 | RI | 10/3/2016 | RI | 1/18/2017 | RI | 6/8/2017 |
| RI | 7/17/2018 | RI | 8/27/2018 | RI | 5/10/2019 | RI | 8/16/2019 |
| RI | 12/4/2019 | RI | 2/28/2020 | RI | 8/15/2020 | RI | 10/1/2020 |
| RI | 3/16/2021 | RI | 7/7/2021 | SC | 10/22/2014 | SC | 4/9/2015 |
| SC | 10/31/2015 | SC | 2/11/2016 | SC | 10/3/2016 | SC | 2/24/2017 |
| SC | 8/31/2017 | SC | 4/4/2018 | SC | 9/11/2018 | SC | 9/5/2019 |
| SC | 12/18/2019 | SC | 2/21/2020 | SC | 6/4/2020 | SC | 9/16/2020 |
| SC | 5/21/2021 | SC | 11/3/2021 | SD | 3/20/2014 | SD | 7/29/2015 |
| SD | 10/6/2015 | SD | 12/13/2015 | SD | 2/15/2016 | SD | 9/28/2016 |
| SD | 2/20/2017 | SD | 6/16/2017 | SD | 6/8/2018 | SD | 5/11/2019 |
| SD | 5/23/2019 | SD | 11/26/2019 | SD | 2/18/2020 | SD | 2/25/2020 |
| SD | 8/19/2020 | SD | 1/22/2021 | SD | 7/6/2021 | TN | 3/18/2014 |
| TN | 2/23/2015 | TN | 7/30/2015 | TN | 9/11/2015 | TN | 10/2/2016 |
| State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date |

| State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TN | 2/17/2017 | TN | 7/6/2017 | TN | 7/19/2018 | TN | 5/10/2019 |
| TN | 7/5/2019 | TN | 2/20/2020 | TN | 3/31/2020 | TN | 5/20/2020 |
| TN | 10/18/2020 | TN | 3/29/2021 | TN | 7/19/2021 | TX | 3/19/2014 |
| TX | 7/31/2015 | TX | 9/30/2016 | TX | 8/21/2017 | TX | 6/29/2018 |
| TX | 5/24/2019 | TX | 5/24/2020 | TX | 6/12/2021 | UT | 3/20/2014 |
| UT | 3/6/2015 | UT | 7/29/2015 | UT | 8/7/2015 | UT | 12/13/2015 |
| UT | 10/3/2016 | UT | 1/25/2017 | UT | 6/2/2017 | UT | 8/22/2018 |
| UT | 8/27/2018 | UT | 5/3/2019 | UT | 8/3/2019 | UT | 2/27/2020 |
| UT | 4/7/2020 | UT | 8/11/2020 | UT | 9/30/2020 | UT | 3/26/2021 |
| UT | 7/8/2021 | UT | 11/3/2021 | VA | 3/14/2014 | VA | 4/18/2015 |
| VA | 7/31/2015 | VA | 9/30/2015 | VA | 12/14/2015 | VA | 9/28/2016 |
| VA | 3/29/2017 | VA | 10/7/2017 | VA | 8/27/2018 | VA | 8/30/2018 |
| VA | 2/25/2019 | VA | 5/11/2019 | VA | 6/17/2019 | VA | 9/16/2019 |
| VA | 3/1/2020 | VA | 8/15/2020 | VA | 9/9/2020 | VA | 5/28/2021 |
| VA | 7/10/2021 | VA | 11/3/2021 | VA | 1/4/2022 | VT | 3/19/2014 |
| VT | 3/20/2015 | VT | 7/31/2015 | VT | 12/13/2015 | VT | 2/11/2016 |
| VT | 9/21/2016 | VT | 2/14/2017 | VT | 5/31/2017 | VT | 6/12/2017 |
| VT | 6/11/2018 | VT | 8/27/2018 | VT | 5/12/2019 | VT | 8/22/2019 |
| VT | 2/12/2020 | VT | 2/27/2020 | VT | 8/3/2020 | VT | 9/11/2020 |
| VT | 5/28/2021 | VT | 7/4/2021 | VT | 11/3/2021 | WA | 3/19/2014 |
| WA | 5/5/2015 | WA | 7/29/2015 | WA | 9/10/2015 | WA | 12/14/2015 |
| WA | 10/28/2016 | WA | 12/23/2016 | WA | 5/24/2017 | WA | 9/16/2017 |
| WA | 12/19/2017 | WA | 7/15/2018 | WA | 5/12/2019 | WA | 5/22/2019 |
| WA | 10/15/2019 | WA | 12/20/2019 | WA | 3/3/2020 | WA | 4/20/2020 |
| WA | 7/22/2021 | WI | 3/18/2014 | WI | 3/3/2015 | WI | 7/31/2015 |
| WI | 9/8/2015 | WI | 10/3/2016 | WI | 3/30/2017 | WI | 6/2/2018 |
| WI | 5/10/2019 | WI | 6/23/2019 | WI | 3/3/2020 | WI | 3/21/2020 |
| WI | 5/31/2020 | WI | 9/29/2020 | WI | 2/24/2021 | WI | 11/3/2021 |
| WV | 4/16/2014 | WV | 3/16/2015 | WV | 7/29/2015 | WV | 9/10/2015 |
| WV | 12/14/2015 | WV | 9/28/2016 | WV | 4/3/2017 | WV | 9/20/2017 |
| WV | 8/14/2018 | WV | 11/6/2018 | WV | 5/12/2019 | WV | 9/5/2019 |
| WV | 2/27/2020 | WV | 3/29/2020 | WV | 8/15/2020 | WV | 10/6/2020 |
| WV | 3/11/2021 | WV | 7/9/2021 | WY | 3/19/2014 | WY | 3/30/2015 |
| WY | 7/29/2015 | WY | 8/6/2015 | WY | 12/13/2015 | WY | 9/28/2016 |
| WY | 2/2/2017 | WY | 7/17/2017 | WY | 7/26/2018 | WY | 8/27/2018 |
| WY | 5/12/2019 | WY | 9/6/2019 | WY | 3/2/2020 | WY | 8/14/2020 |
| WY | 10/9/2020 | WY | 1/13/2021 | WY | 7/6/2021 | | |
| State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date | State | Election Date |

### A.1.2 Manual Data Collection

We manually collect data on the number of elections administered each year between 2014 and 2024 from county websites for the 400 most populous counties. In total, we were able to collect at least 1 year's worth of data for 346 jurisdictions and full panel data for 315 counties. The correlation between the manually collected workload data and the L2 voter file method is r = .69.

## A.2 On-Cycle Elections and Number of Election Days Using Manual Data Collection

Table A.2 is identical to Table 1 in the main analysis, with manually collected election date data used instead of election date data calculated from the voter file. The results are similar albeit it slightly less consistent than those in the main analysis. Column 1 shows a noisy null relationship between jurisdictions in on-cycle states and yearly number of election days. When states switch to on-cycle, jurisdictions typically see a 1 election date reduction over each 4-year period (column 2). Column 3 implausibly estimates an increase in yearly election days in counties with municipalities that move on-cycle, although it is imprecisely estimated and not statistically significant. On the other hand, Florida counties see a nearly mean-size decrease in the yearly number of election days when all of their municipalities switch from off- to on-cycle (column 4). This is a statistically significant effect. Taken together, we interpret this as additional evidence that consolidating municipal elections on-cycle generally reduces the number of election days administrators conduct each year.

Table A.2: **Effect of On-Cycle Elections on Number of Election Days**

| | Yearly Election Days | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| On-Cycle | 0.098 | -0.252 | | |
| | (0.340) | (0.186) | | |
| Percent On-Cycle | | | 1.006 | -2.373 |
| | | | (1.399) | (0.757) |
| Years | 11 | 11 | 7 | 5 |
| Observations | 3815 | 3815 | 198 | 141 |
| Outcome Mean | 2.86 | 2.86 | 2.59 | 3.06 |
| Jurisdiction FEs | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Year FEs | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Coverage | National | National | CA | FL |

Robust standard errors clustered by state (columns 1 and 2) and jurisdiction (columns 3 and 4) in parentheses. On-cycle codings range from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating all local elections are off-cycle, 1/3 indicating municipalities are allowed to decide whether to hold their elections off- or on-cycle but most hold them off-cycle, 2/3 indicating municipalities are allowed to decide but most hold elections on-cycle, and 1 indicating that all local elections are held on-cycle. Percent On-Cycle is the percentage of municipalities within an election jurisdiction (county) that hold their elections on-cycle. Yearly Election Days are calculated from manually collected data for the 400 most populous counties between 2014 and 2024.

## A.3 Additional Voter Experience Results

Table A.3 shows tabular results for the right panel of Figure 1 in the main analysis, estimating the effect of on-cycle elections on the average voters' wait time.

Table A.3: **Effect of On-Cycle Elections on Voter Confidence**

| | Very Confident Vote Counted Correctly | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Own Vote | County Vote | State Vote | National Vote |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| On-Cycle | -0.043 | -0.011 | -0.017 | 0.075 |
| | (0.046) | (0.031) | (0.044) | (0.041) |
| Years | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Observations | 41717 | 46011 | 45986 | 45861 |
| Outcome Mean | 0.71 | 0.61 | 0.52 | 0.34 |
| County FEs | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Year FEs | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Individual Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses. Individual controls are age, gender, race, education, income, and party identity.

In Table 4 of the main analysis, we estimate the effect of jurisdictions switching to on-cycle municipal elections on voters' confidence that their own vote and their national vote is counted correctly. Table A.4 expands that analysis to include voters' county vote (column 2) and state vote (column 3). The results are similarly null.

Table A.4: **Effect of On-Cycle Elections on Voter Wait Times**

| | No Wait | Wait 0-10 min | Wait 10-30 min | Wait 30-60 min | Wait > 1 hr |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
| On-Cycle | -0.104 | -0.006 | 0.082 | 0.014 | 0.013 |
| | (0.020) | (0.058) | (0.018) | (0.026) | (0.014) |
| Years | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Observations | 27891 | 27891 | 27891 | 27891 | 27891 |
| Outcome Mean | 0.44 | 0.31 | 0.16 | 0.06 | 0.02 |
| County FEs | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Year FEs | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Individual Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses. Individual controls are age, gender, race, education, income, and party identity.